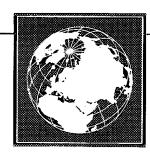




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NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA (continued) Afghanistan: **Taliban Making Gains** The religious student militia on Sunday captured Shindand, one of the government's largest airbases, and today captured Herat, according to press reports; last week it defeated a government offensive against it in the south. The airbase was controlled by Rabbani ally Ismail Khan, and It may have had 30 percent of the operational aircraft in the country, including fighter-bombers and attack helicopters. - Press reports say the government is preparing to retake Shindand. Khan needed heavy reinforcement from Kabul to drive Taliban from his area in April, but the loss of Shindand will make another such effort more difficult. Continued Taliban advances near the Iranian border could provoke a response from Tehran. Israel: